

# Labour, agency and social reproduction: the case of call centres

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# Agenda

- **Introduction.**
- **Key strands of literature.**
- **Research Questions.**
- **Methodology.**
- **Summary.**

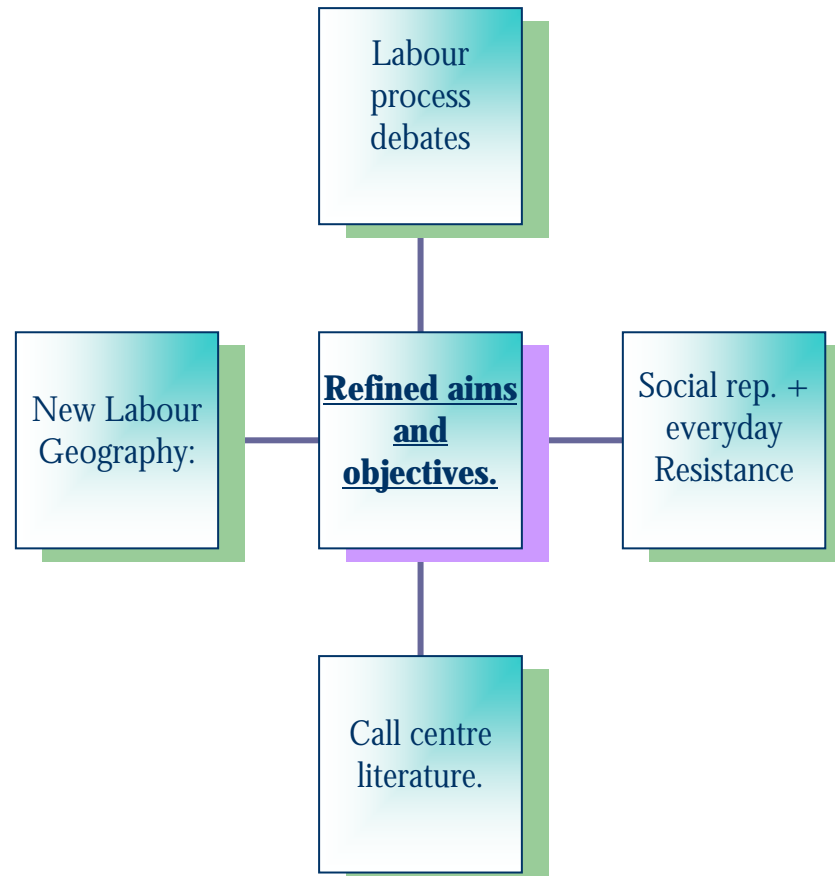
# Introduction

- ‘Labour, agency and social reproduction’.
- *Why* labour? Something we all do....
- What *is* labour? An input explained...
- Social reproduction: ‘the fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life’ (Katz 2001: 710).
- Supply in society, communities...

# General Aims

- To investigate how labour exerts agency inside the workplace - and how this varies from place to place.
- To show that labour is not a passive victim of capitalism or global trends, that labour and capital negotiate with each other...
- To show that social reproduction and local labour markets make a difference to how general processes (i.e. call centres) are experienced.

# Literatures (1).



## Literatures (2)

- Labour process debates – Braverman (1974) and deskilling thesis; agency and consent (e.g. Burawoy 1979).
- New Labour Geography – Herod (2001); high profile union/mass organization.
- Agency and social reproduction – Scott (1985), Katz (2004); everyday passive resistance, false compliance, social relations...
- Call centre literature – industrial sociology, management; control typologies, emotional labour...

# Aims and Objectives: Questions...

- What is the staff experience of working in call centres? What are their rationales, their motives for doing so. Importantly, how does this connect to their broader circumstance and life outside?
- Inside the workplace, in what ways is agency performed? How do different control typologies alter the ways this agency is exercised?
- How does work and non-work life interact – in what ways does social reproduction tie to the labour market; and is there a rubbing off and/or negotiation between these different spheres of labour?
- How may these findings inform the operation and practice inside call centres – what are the implications in terms of staff motivation, turnover, and ‘best practice’ that call centres may adopt?

# Research Design

- Case studies, heterogeneous 'place' ...
- Critical realist approach.
- Dublin and Glasgow.
- A triangulation of methods.



# Research Methods\*

- Ethnographic: research diary. One month full time participant observation in one call centre per location.
- Interviews. 50 interviews.
- Focus Groups: 4, 2 per location. 5-7 staff members.
- Access issues: development agencies, trade associations...

# Summary.

- Labour through agency and social reproduction.
- Different strands.
- Qualitative research.
- Comparative study, across space....